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ASSESSMENT OF THE THREAT OF COMMUNIST SUBVERSION

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IN THE BAGHDAD PACT AREA

US SUBMISSION

July 15, 1959

I. INTRODUCTION

The following report is the US submission for the Liaison Committee meeting to be held in Ankara in August 1959.

II. THE IMMEDIATE THREAT TO THE PACT AREA

The trends noted by the Liaison Committee in January 1959, have continued during the period under review. Friction between the International Communist Movement and radical Arab nationalism as represented by President Nasir became more pronounced and for a short time the UAR's anti-Communist campaign developed into open denunciation of the USSR and Communist imperialism. While the tension between the UAR and the USSR has eased, the UAR has maintained its anti-Communist posture and has continued to denounce Communist actions in the Middle East area, particularly in Iraq. This conflict with the USSR and international Communism over political influence in the Arab World so far has had little influence upon the UAR's economic relationship with the Sino-Soviet Bloc. The recently concluded agreement under which the USSR will begin construction of the first stage of the new Aswan dam is an example of the continuing close economic relations.

The change of Soviet policy with regard to the utilization of Communist parties in the Middle East which had become apparent in the fall of 1958 was confirmed by the Twenty-first Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union held in Moscow from January 27 through February 5, 1959. The generally harder posture of the USSR in international affairs also has made itself

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felt in the Pact area. These changes in the Soviet approach have made the Communist threat to the Pact area more apparent than it had been heretofore. The actions of the Communist Party in Iraq and the suppression of the revolt in Tibet specifically have served to bring home to many leaders in the Pact area the true nature of Sino-Soviet aims in the Afro-Asian region.

III. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aims and objectives of the USSR in the Pact area have not changed significantly during the period under review, but they have for the most part been given emphasis through Soviet policy statements, Bloc propaganda, and actions by the local Communist Parties. These aims may be summarized as follows:

- (a) Destruction of security systems such as the Baghdad Pact, which are directed against Soviet aggression and Communist penetration.
- (b) Elimination of all Western political, economic and cultural ties.
- (c) Establishment of the Soviet Bloc as the major source of political influence, of military supply and advice, the most important trading partner and source of economic aid, and a prominent source of cultural influence in the countries of the Pact area.

IV. METHODS

The changes in Soviet Bloc methods noted in the last report of the Liaison Committee continued during the period under review. In his opening

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speech to the Twenty First Party Congress Soviet Premier Khrushchev in direct reply to criticisms of Communists voiced in the UAR stated that it was "reactionary," "wrong," and "unreasonable" to accuse the Communists of undermining Arab unity and asserted they were its ardent champions. He also stressed that after having achieved independence from "colonial" rule, the leaders of the Afro-Asian states should achieve social progress at home, and that the "progressive forces" (i.e. the Communists) were striving for this goal against the opposition of "internal reactionary forces." Soviet sympathies, he added, were naturally with those progressive forces. Khrushchev's speech and other statements, among them those of Arab Communist leaders, indicated not only that Moscow was reluctant to restrain local Communists, but also that it considered the time ripe to encourage activity by local Communist parties in the Afro-Asian area in order to strengthen their prestige, political standing, and potentialities. The statements made at the Congress tended to confirm earlier evidence of Soviet depreciation of the value of close cooperation with neutralist governments where such cooperation conflicted with the effective operation of strong local Communist forces. The forum of the Congress thus served official notice that Communist activities in the Middle East would continue unabated, if necessary in direct opposition to Nasser and the Arab nationalist forces under his leadership.

Soviet propaganda has continued to exploit the theme of "Western imperialism" trying to perpetuate any latent distrust of the West in the area and, where possible, prevent area governments from continuing or establishing closer relations with the Western powers. Accusations of being

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subservient to the "imperialists" have been directed not only against area governments traditionally friendly to the West, but also against the UAR government. There have also been some attempts by Soviet propaganda to exploit religious themes. The U.S. was accused of misusing Islam for political purposes and in an article in the World Marxist Review of June 1959 (vol. 2, no. 6) the UAR government was accused of "trampling upon" Arab and Islamic traditions. In Iraq the Communists apparently have had some success in infiltrating Shia religious circles.

Emphasis upon the utilization of local Communist parties for the furtherance of Soviet aims along the lines laid down by recent Soviet statements has shown itself very clearly in Iraq. Iraq is the first example in the Pact area where the International Communist Movement was able to exploit fully a revolutionary situation and where it risked open conflict with extreme nationalist forces to achieve its purpose. The methods used by the Communists in Iraq have been reminiscent in many respects of the methods used in the penetration of European countries in the period immediately following World War II for the purpose of reducing them eventually to the status of Soviet satellites. An important difference between the present Eastern European satellites and Iraq is, however, that those countries were contiguous to the Soviet sphere and that as a result of wartime operations Soviet armed forces were within their confines. In Iraq the success of the Communist bid for power is by no means assured and there have been increasing signs recently that the Communists may have overreached themselves.

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Generally, the widening rift between Communists and nationalists makes it much more difficult for the Communists to exploit extreme nationalist movements for their purposes and to establish "unity of action" with various genuinely nationalist forces, although attempts in this direction are still being made, as recently in Iraq. This rift has also affected Afro-Asian Solidarity activities where there has been mounting competition between the Soviet Union and nationalist, neutralist countries, particularly the UAR.

In spite of Soviet support for the local Communist parties and the evidence of increasing political difficulties between the Communists and nationalists in various parts of the Pact area, the Soviet Union has endeavored, and on the whole successfully, to preserve its close state-to-state relationship with such countries as the UAR. This has been true particularly in the economic field where the Soviet Bloc is obviously anxious to preserve and expand the advantages it has gained during the past years.

V. COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES IN MEMBER STATES OF THE PACT AREA

Within the member states the Communist threat continued to be contained. However, Soviet propaganda pressure against these countries has increased. Following the breakdown in February 1959 of Soviet-Iranian negotiations for a non-aggression pact, Soviet propaganda against Iran was stepped up considerably and has emanated from Radio Moscow as well as a clandestine station. The propaganda broadcasts against Turkey and Iran from a station in Leipzig (East German) have continued during the period under review.

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VI. THREAT TO THE FACT AREA FROM SOVIET PENETRATION AND COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES IN ADJACENT COUNTRIES

A. The United Arab Republic

The anti-Communist campaign begun in December 1958 by UAR authorities has brought to a virtual standstill any serious Communist activity within the UAR and has heightened sensitivity throughout the area to the threat of Communist subversion. In the period under review, UAR security officials, with varying degrees of success, moved against known and suspected Communists and their apparatus while UAR propaganda officials (and Nasir himself) launched a massive, and apparently rather successful, campaign of anti-Communist indoctrination designed to reach and influence broad segments of the population.

For a short period, this campaign developed into open denunciation of the USSR and "Communist imperialism" but the common interest of both countries in avoiding a break brought about a retreat from the exposed positions to which the UAR especially had become committed. Nonetheless, the conflict of Nasir with Communists is continuing and has important ramifications in the Arab World as well as in Afro-Asian affairs. Thus, the capabilities of the various Communist parties in other Arab countries to infiltrate and use nationalist movements has probably been weakened by the UAR's anti-Communist propaganda and the Soviet Union has lost much of its aura as a "disinterested friend" of newly-independent nations.

1. The Egyptian Region. The factionalism which had emerged within six months of the unification of the various splinter Communist groups in January 1958 continued to grow in the period under review and not

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even the government assault on the movement brought the factions closer. The reaction of the Communists to anti-Communist speeches was one of anger expressed primarily in pamphlets and warning the government of the dangers of its course of action. In the roundup of January 1959 most of the top Communists in the country were arrested and the Party's clandestine liaison and distribution apparatus, already crippled by internal disputes, was further paralyzed. Limited printing facilities left to the Party had to be moved so often that little work could be done and even when done the problem of distribution was difficult. However, enough pamphlets attacking President Nasir were distributed to prompt another wave of arrests in March during which suspects of lower levels of the Party and other leftists were apprehended. The arrests in late March were accompanied, as in early January, by dismissals and transfers within the government, educational institutions and information media. At present the Haditu faction remains the most active. The Communist splinter Vanguard is dormant as is the United Egyptian Communist Party. The few leaders of the Party not arrested remain in hiding and may lack the personal strength to develop significant regroupings of the Party.

2. The Syrian Region. The Party organization seems to have been effectively if perhaps only temporarily disorganized by the government purge of the last six months. Links between the Central Committee and the various elements of the Party appear to have been severed and the Party probably is directed from Beirut. Some clandestine operations continue among the many Communists who fled ^{from} Syria into northern Lebanon at the time of the major moves against the Party in January. Apparently anticipating the blow,

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the Party members were warned to reduce activity and to reorganize the clandestine organizations. There is some reason to believe that most members of the Central Committee escaped arrest and are in hiding in Lebanon, with Tripoli joining Beirut as a new center of Communist activity. Within Syria, there is little or no Communist activity at the present; furthermore, Party tactics apparently call for restrained activity in Lebanon in order to avoid jeopardizing the Lebanese haven.

The course of the travels of Khalid Bakdash since his departure from Syria before the beginning of the arrests is not clear. He appears almost certainly to have been in Lebanon at the time of the Nasir speech of December 23 denouncing the Syrian Communist Party. There is no firm evidence to support the reports widely circulated shortly thereafter that he went from there to Baghdad to attend a meeting of Arab Communists. He may have traveled from Lebanon via Italy to Moscow where he attended the Twenty First Party Congress in January. At the Congress he delivered a speech in which he asserted that his Party would continue to operate and to fight for "social reforms" and outlined a program for the Party which in effect would all but dissolve the Syro-Egyptian union and grant his Party freer scope for its activities. Bakdash, along with other Arab Communist Party leaders, expressed "alarm" at the anti-Communist campaign being waged in the Arab World and hailed the new Iraqi republic as the "greatest victory achieved by the Arab liberation movement in the Middle East." In March Bakdash attended the Polish Communist Party Congress. His personal primacy among Arab

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Communists remains undisputed.

The anti-Communist campaign waged by the government in the Syrian Region lacked the firmness of the Egyptian purge a fact which reportedly led to some tension in relations between the Central Government Minister of Interior Zakarya Muhi al-Din and Syrian Region Minister of Interior Sarraj. The pattern of the purge in Syria was similar to that of Egypt: arrests, dismissals and transfers. The effects of the initial campaign in January were not long-lasting since most of the reported 300-400 arrested were released after signing affidavits repudiating the Party. After the abortive Mosul revolt in March 1959 another sweep was made, larger in its dimensions and apparently more effectively handled. Latest figures suggest that some 700 Syrians may be detained. The most important part of the post-Mosul campaign was a purge of suspected Communists in the army. That the regime is particularly concerned with security in the military is suggested by a decree of June 20, 1959 amending provisions of the Military Penal Code to strengthen the punishment for political, especially Communist activities.

B. Iraq

Iraq has continued to be the key country in the Communist effort to penetrate the Middle East and the success or failure of the Communists to achieve undisputed power in that country may well determine the outcome of the struggle for power by the Communist movement throughout the Middle East. In the year since the revolution of July 1958, the Communist Party of Iraq has grown from a negligible and apparently demoralized political faction into a bold and well-organized political force; in fact, it constitutes the

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best-organized civilian movement in the country. The Iraqi Party's drive for power constitutes the first instance in the Arab World of a full-scale and undisguised Communist attempt to take over a nationalist movement from within. The Communists have succeeded in penetrating various facets of the national life and, as in other countries, were able to take advantage of the ousting of "unreliable, old-regime" officials by presenting semi-qualified candidates where few qualified persons not associated with the old regime were available. In this fashion they were able to obtain key policy and administrative posts below the ministerial level and to influence or control the functioning of several ministries even though the ministers themselves were non-Communist.

An extremely important adjunct to the Communist drive for power has been control of the street, particularly in the larger cities. Since the security forces could not be brought easily under Communist control without risking a conflict with Premier Qasim, the Communist Party concentrated upon an auxiliary security force, the Popular Resistance Force, which the government had created on the Syrian model. This force became an early target of Communist infiltration and was virtually controlled by the Communists by the fall of 1958. It conducted street and border patrols, searched vehicles and homes and summarily arrested a large number of people.

Until late in May it appeared questionable whether the Communist drive to obtain full power in Iraq could be arrested. The revolt by tribal and army elements in Mosul in March 1959 was abortive and appeared to have disorganized whatever army and civilian opposition remained to a Communist

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takeover. There have been various signs, however, in recent months that Premier Qasim has decided to curb further Communist advances to power. In several speeches Qasim stated that he would not allow any activities by political parties. The National Democratic Party announced its readiness to comply with the Premier's wishes, but the Communists appeared determined to continue party activities. There also has been evidence that Qasim endeavored to strengthen his hold on army loyalties, and the functions of the Popular Resistance Force apparently were curtailed. The long-rumored cabinet reorganization which took place on July 13, did not provide a clear answer as to the future role of the Communists. Three of the new ministers are at least Communist sympathizers and the new position of Ibrahim Kubba, the former Minister of Economics, as Minister of Agricultural Reform and Acting Minister of Oil has obvious potentialities. However, the changes are too recent to permit any firm conclusions.

In sum, the Communist Party drive for power in Iraq appears to have been slowed down in recent weeks. However, the Communists have not been forced to yield any of the gains they had made through earlier penetrations, except in the upper echelons of the army, and the recent cabinet changes might be utilized by them for consolidation if not expansion of power. At this point the situation is inconclusive. It is not clear how far Qasim wishes to or can go in efforts to curb the Communists and the Communist tactics are equally unclear. (Reportedly, the Communists themselves are split on the question of tactics.) They may attempt to resist any possible restrictive government measures and thereby risk a showdown with Qasim or they may choose to remain quiescent for the time being, concentrating on the consolidation of the gains already made.

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In its international relations the Iraq Government has continued to stress cordial relations with the Sino-Soviet Bloc. Bloc technicians have come to the country in increasing numbers. Bloc arms aid has been accepted and economic relations between Iraq and the Bloc are expanding.

C. Lebanon

Events in Syria and Iraq have stimulated Communist activity in Lebanon. The greater freedom of political activities in that country has permitted the Communists to find asylum as well as use it as a base from which to operate publicly and covertly. However, recognizing the importance of Lebanon as a haven, the Party is showing restraint in its activity in order to avoid situations which would induce the Lebanese Government to move against them. Efforts are being made not to antagonize the Christians and there is probably some attempt to exploit Christian fear of Nasir for the benefit of the Communist Party.

As indicated earlier, Beirut and Tripoli have become important centers for both Lebanon and Syria. The leadership of the Lebanese Party -- Nicola Shawi, Farajallah Hilm especially -- have become active lieutenants for Bakdash in Syria. The separation of the parties in December has become largely academic in light of the organizational crisis inspired by the UAR drive against Communists.

D. Jordan

The Communist Party in Jordan continues under severe repression and is in the lowest state of activity and esteem in the country in several years. Reports in the late summer and fall of 1958 indicated that the Party had been

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encouraged by Communist progress in Iraq. Party Chief Fuad Nasr may have spent some time during 1958 in Baghdad. However, his presence there with other area Communist leaders has not been confirmed. The influence of the anti-Communist campaign conducted by the UAR has made itself felt in Jordan. The Bath Party and other Jordanian nationalist groups largely ceased to protect the Communists as fellow opponents of the regime, making the government's task of control easier. A new round of arrests took place in June 1959 which also gave the police possession of some Party records and quantities of propaganda material.

E. India

The Communist Party of India (CPI), the largest opposition party in the Indian Parliament and in the West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh state legislatures and the ruling party in Kerala state, remains a definite long-range threat to Indian stability. However, the Party faced more articulate and forceful criticism from non-Communist Indian leaders during the last six months. This criticism centered primarily on the Party's manifest external loyalties and its inability to maintain law and order in Kerala. In the international sphere, India's relations with Communist China deteriorated markedly as a result of the Tibetan revolt but those with the Soviet Union remained good to all appearances.

The CPI's ultimate objective is the institution of Communist rule in India and a total revamping of the Indian social, political, and economic structure along classical Communist lines. However, as an interim measure it aspires to establish a Communist-dominated national coalition government

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of "people's democracy." Accordingly, its present tactical line stresses building a reputation for moderation and respectability and the conclusion of loose united front agreements, leaving the Party extensive latitude for maneuvering, with virtually any amenable ally.

Although the Party continued during the first six months of 1959 to make progress toward its short-term objective, this progress was at a slower rate than that manifest at any time since the 1957 Indian general elections. The CPI succeeded in enlisting the support of other opposition parties and groups in anti-government agitations in some areas and has reportedly made some inroads in rural areas of West Bengal to complement its strong base in Calcutta. In addition, the party has registered a net gain of two seats in by-elections for the various state assemblies since 1957, the same gain as that made by the Congress Party. These seats were captured from the socialists, minor national and regional parties, and Independents. The polarization of Indian politics between Nehru's Congress Party and the Communists thus remains a definite long-range possibility.

However, the CPI suffered two notable setbacks to its popular prestige during early 1959. First, its public support for the Chinese Communist stand on the Tibetan revolt emphasized its external loyalties and cost the party support among the Indian intelligentsia. On March 31 the CPI Secretariat, the party's top executive body, blamed the revolt on "reactionaries who do not want to move with the times" and who "have the sympathy and support of Chiang Kai-shek and the American imperialists." The statement went on to

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denounce "reactionaries" in India whose "one aim is to sow discord" between India and Communist China. Further, it supported the Chinese Communist allegation that the Indian city of Kalimpong was the "command center" for the revolt and recommended that "our government should immediately investigate the affairs in Kalimpong and place the truth before the people."

This statement was strongly attacked within India. The non-Communist press launched the most concerted campaign against the CPI since the Party discarded the use of violence as an immediate tactic in 1951, and other political parties publicized this renewed evidence of the Indian Communists' subservience to international communism. More importantly, in a press conference on April 5 Prime Minister Nehru commented that the "CPI shows, even more than is suspected, a certain lack of balance in mind and a total absence of feelings of decency and nationality." He continued: "What they [the Indian Communists] are, I do not know. They cease to be Indian if they talk this way."

Secondly, by mid-1959 the Communist-dominated government in Kerala was facing the most serious challenge in its 26 months of control over the state. Opposition groups, showing greater unity than during previous agitations against the Communist regime, launched on June 12 a campaign which they hoped would unseat the Communists. They centered their attack primarily against the Kerala Education Act passed by the state legislature in January 1959 to strengthen the government's control over private educational institutions, but included other grievances against the Communists as well. By late June,

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11. persons had been killed during anti-government demonstrations and several thousand had been arrested. Although these agitations had not forced the Communists from office by late June, they produced extensive adverse nationwide publicity and increased the prospects that the Communist regime might be ousted before the next scheduled elections (1962) or might voluntarily relinquish office to prevent developments in Kerala from further damaging the Party's national stature.

Meanwhile, the Communist Party, concerned over the institution of military rule in Pakistan and Burma, began to place greater emphasis on developing its potential for covert operations in case a successor government following Nehru's death or retirement might attempt to suppress the Party.

In the international sphere, increased strains were placed on India's relations with the Sino-Soviet Bloc, particularly those with Communist China, by the repercussions of the Tibetan revolt and the Chinese Communists' continued circulation of maps showing large areas of Indian territory within Communist China. Though Nehru's stand on Tibet was tempered by security considerations, he left no doubt in his public utterances that his sympathies were with the Tibetans. By mid-1959 the battle of words between Indian leaders and Chinese Communist leaders had subsided, but Sino-Indian relations remained cool and more formal than before the Tibetan uprising.

F. Afghanistan

There still is no internal Communist threat of any significance in Afghanistan. However, Soviet influence in the country has increased during

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the period under review. The Afghan Foreign Minister and the Prime Minister visited Moscow and reached agreement with the Soviet Government on a grant aid of 40,000 tons of wheat and on the construction of a road from the Soviet border through Herat to Kandahar. While this opportunity to operate in southern Afghanistan constitutes a definite gain for the Soviets, Afghan officials continue to remain confident that they can control the political consequences of Soviet aid measures and have indicated that they wish to maintain their policy of neutrality in the cold war.

Within the country Soviet technicians do not appear to be pursuing political missions and the Afghans are quick to punish military trainees who are suspect of "excessive" interest in Soviet contacts. However, in the cultural and propaganda field the leftist bend noted in the last report has continued. The Afghan press lent editorial support to Chinese Communist actions in Tibet, a few students from Communist China were admitted to Afghanistan to study Pushtu, courses in Russian were begun in two Afghan institutions and Afghan propaganda agencies showed an increased willingness to reproduce anti-Western Soviet press releases.

VII. CONCLUSIONS AND OUTLOOK

At the present time the policies of the International Communist Movement in the Pact area appear to be approaching a crossroads. Communist gains in Iraq since the revolution of June 14, 1958 have been impressive, but they have also been the immediate cause of a conflict between Communist and nationalist forces in the Arab World which has made it increasingly more

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difficult for the International Communist Movement to utilize nationalist groups in that area for its purposes. The decision of the Soviet Government, as expressed at the Twenty First Party Congress, to support local Communist parties more energetically than before, has led, and is likely to continue to lead, to strains in the relations between the Soviet Bloc and neutralist governments. Events in Tibet have also served to bring home the true character of Sino-Soviet imperialism to wide circles in Asia and to dispel the impression that the Bloc is a disinterested friend of "colonial" and newly independent peoples in Asia and Africa. In spite of these strains the Sino-Soviet Bloc has been able on the whole, to preserve its state-to-state relationships with neutralist countries and to maintain, if not advance, its economic offensive. In relations with pro-Western governments in the Pact area, the general hardening of the Soviet stand in international affairs has led to more intensive propaganda efforts and less inclination to make conciliatory gestures.

The tactics of the International Communist Movement and of the Sino-Soviet Bloc governments in the Pact area during the next six months are likely to become apparent primarily in Iraq and in Soviet relations with the UAR. The Soviet Union probably does not wish an open conflict in Iraq between the local Communists and the present Iraqi Government and may restrain the local Party. If the local Party suffers significant setbacks, the Soviet Union is likely to give strong propaganda support to the Communist viewpoint, but may be inclined to cut its losses if the Bloc can maintain a close

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state-to-state relationship with the ~~Qasim~~ regime. The Soviet Government may feel that increasing economic and military dependence of Iraq on the Bloc gives the Communists long-range opportunities which could be endangered by a too-rapid overt move for power. Furthermore, strong support of the Communists in a conflict with Qassem is likely to endanger what gains the Sino-Soviet Bloc made in the rest of the Arab World during the past years.

It is, however, possible that in Iraq, which will probably remain the key area, the situation will settle down to an uneasy balance, with the Communists being arrested in their move for power but essentially retaining their gains. In the rest of the Arab World the Sino-Soviet Bloc is likely to retain its economic influence, but may find it increasingly difficult to support Arab Communist parties while at the same time maintaining cordial relations with the local governments. Strains are also likely to make themselves felt more and more in the Afro-Asian movements.

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